



Cambridge DANCE Chronicle by Mike Petty

c.69.2 : dance and dancing in Cambridge 1888 to 1990

1897 02 27

The Guildhall floor has become so unsafe that when a ball is held in the large room the most elaborate precautions have to be taken to support the beams in the ceiling of the Free Library beneath. This shoring-up process costs something like 30/- each time and is a sheer waste of money 1897 02 27
CDN

1900

1904

Cost of converting Corn Exchange for ball is several thousand pounds for one evening [6.19]

1907 12 28

About 100 were present at the Misses Storey's Christmas dance at the Victoria Assembly Ball Rooms, prettily decorated with ferns, mistletoe and festoons. Two new dances, the Empire barn dance and the Esperanto figured in the programme. There being a dearth of Valeta music Mr Oliver Clifton has produced a pretty composition named 'The Storey' which he played on the piano with Mr G. Jackson on violin. Dancing continued until 2.15 am. 07 12 28

1909 12 10

The new skating rink at the back of Hertford Street was constructed to avoid any noise nuisance. Rinking was a fashionable amusement and there would be a charge so it would not be overrun with the rough element. They wanted to have a string band, with no drums, to play at intervals. There was not the slightest intention of making it a dancing saloon but they would like a licence so it could be used for subscription dances during May Week. CWN 09 12 10

1910

1913 06 13

Upwards of 400 guests attended the Cavalry & Artillery Ball at the Corn Exchange and Guildhall which were beautifully decorated. The ballroom was fitted up in the Corn Exchange where a capital floor had been prepared. The room handsomely and luxuriously upholstered and decorated by Eaden Lilley & Co. A striped canopy set off with festoons of artificial flowers hit the roof and large mirrors on the walls reflected the light of hundreds of electric lamps. 13 06 13 p5 CIP

1914 01 17

Tango popular, demand for gramophone records [4.6]

1915 06 11

Mary Macaulay teacher of folk dancing at Folk Dancing Society, enthusiasm died out with coming of the war 15 06 11 p7

1920

1923

Mackenzie School of Music & Dramatic art established [9.6]

1924 02 02

The renewal of the music and dancing licence of the Cambridge Co-operative hall, was objected to on the grounds of noise. Burleigh Street was one of the most densely populated parts of the town. The hall was not originally built for dancing, it had a large number of windows and the dancing room was situated on the top floor of the highest building in the neighbourhood, with the result that the sound was dissipated considerably further. As a rule the dances did not terminate until midnight and sometimes a great noise was caused by the people leaving - shouting, singing and the back-firing of motor cycles, of which a large number were brought by the people who attended 24 02 02

1924 11 05

A feature of the concert given at St Paul's Institute was the debut of Mr Sydney Coulson's dance orchestra in Cambridge. The band comprises Mr Percy Stock (violin), Tom Boyce (saxophone & banjo), Harry Hunt, late of the New Theatre Orchestra (drums) and Mr Sydney Coulson (director) at the piano. With the dance season here the need for a good dance orchestra grows ever greater and there is no doubt that the Coulson band will be in great demand 24 11 05

1925 01

County Ball at Guildhall a brilliant function [3.5]

1925 02 19

For the University Pitt Club ball the Guildhall has always been very cleverly decorated. The Large Room served as ballroom, the orchestra seats hidden behind tapestry hangings. There were close on 400 dancers. As a buffet the Small Room has seldom looked better. Supper was served in the Corn Exchange, access to which was gained by means of a covered way connecting it with the Guildhall. The fare provided was most appetising. Our representative gazed with pardonable envy upon a well-dressed boar's head, a swan with a waxen neck and other fine fare 25 02 19

1926 03 05

At the Licensing Session Mr Eric Pointer made an application for a new music and dancing licence for the Assembly Rooms, Market Passage, Cambridge, from 1pm to midnight. A complaint had been received on the grounds of the noise being more or less a perpetual nuisance. During term time the noise and hubbub had been almost unbearable. Not only was there shouting and yelling, but there was hammering as if someone was tacking something up. There was plenty of accommodation for dancing – the Central Hall, the Guildhall, the Corn Exchange and the Dorothy – and this new licence was unnecessary. The application was refused 26 03 05

1926 08 09

A Country Dance party on Christ's Pieces, organised by the English Folk Dance Society who are holding a Summer School in Cambridge, attracted a large audience. The party comprised some 500 dancers from America and all parts of England whose dances such as "Rufty Tufty", "Newcastle" and "Sellenger's Round" took one as far back as 600 years. The natural and care-free movements were a pleasant relief from the Bunny Hug, Cakewalk and Charleston 26 08 09

1926 09 17

P.C.Q – "Please Charleston Quietly" is the plea of all real dance lovers as was evidenced at the Rendezvous Ballroom, Cambridge, when demonstrations of the new Flat Charleston Waltz, Tango and Fox-Trot were given. In its new form, with all distasteful kickings and stampings eliminated, the Charleston will appeal to the most fastidious. The Rendezvous with its new decoration, improved sitting-out accommodation and the popular Nobby Clark and his band is assured of an even greater following 26 09 17

1927 03 21

The Charleston shows no signs of waning in popularity at the Premier Dance Hall, Chesterton, and still reigns supreme among the habitués there. In fact this dancing habit has become so much of the place that one sees more uniformity in the style than at any other hall in Cambridge. On Saturday evening Manning's Band were in their usual good form and played extremely well. Miss Robinson must be one of the last jazz pianists in the town at present. 27 03 21

1927 10 17

University Arms ballroom opens, 27 10 17 p5*

1928 08 13

Dancers and band musicians thronged to a dance band contest at the Rendezvous in Magrath Avenue, Cambridge. Eleven bands took their turns on the platforms. Each played a fox-trot and a waltz. A fault with several bands was that the violinists showed a tendency to overdo their parts. Judging was by popular vote and the results were: 1st Cambs Mental Hospital Dance Band, 2nd Jack Vivian's Dance Band & 3rd Sid Parsley's Dance Band. The winners, who previously were practically unknown to the dancing public, played in confident style and nicely together. The band is a six-piece and undoubtedly more will be heard of it. 28 04 13

1928 09 28

Rendezvous ballroom reopens, 28 09 28 p8

1929 04 27

Cambridge to have a modern caravanserie matched the modern splendours of Oxford St & Regent street where a thousand people may dine without strain on the service & dance too if they are so minded, a place of dignity & comfort & of surpassing resource. The old Dorothy cafe is to disappear - not so very old though as a modern restaurant - & a building of three storeys spanning space between Sidney St & Hobson street. Ground floor entrance Sidney St is shop & showroom & on eastern side a dining hall or restaurant. Principal staircase to first floor will be from hall at Hobson street entrance & access to a dance hall with black hornbeam floor on springs. This accommodation for 320 diners at a public banquet but specially prepared for dancing for 450 at once. At western end another dining hall. Another on second floor, to seat 80, suitable private dinner of clubs & organisations. perhaps this will be the oak room which intention of Hawkins to decorate; also roof garden looking across to gardens of Christ's college. Nags Head inn will not disappear but be given place in the basement. Will take 18 months but Hobson Street side will be completed before start made with Sidney St front to ensure restaurant open throughout

1930s

Stirlingaires, Cambridge best known war-time band formed early 1930s by employees of Marshalls & Shorts [10.9]

1931

Percy Cowell opened Dorothy Ballroom 85 01 11

1933 02 02

The annual domestics staff ball at the Dorothy attracted 450 servants. Although the ballroom became on the crowded side, everybody was happy. Nothing is nicer than a good servant's ball and it was good to see so many heads of households present. Percy Cowell and his band was in a particularly bright mood and led a 'merry dance; with a varied programme. The great attraction was the fancy dress parade. 33 02 02

1933 02 17

Mr A.W. Jones, the Cambridge music teacher, has added yet another to his growing list of compositions. It is a song fox-trot 'The Girl Most Suitable for Me' which has been featured with success by Alex Alexander and his Radio boys. It should prove very popular. 33 02 17

1934 02 16

Many dancers in Cambridge will learn with regret that Ron Wickes has been compelled to give up his position as official drummer to Percy Cowell's Band. He started drumming with them at the old Rendezvous before joining the band run by Mr Hensher, and later played with Manning's Band when the Premier Hall at Old Chesterton was opened up. From there he went to Skegness for two seasons, returning to the Rendezvous in the interval. He came back to Cambridge three years ago when Mr Cowell started his band at the Dorothy Café and has played with them ever since. 34 02 16

1934 05 02

Dorothy Café ballroom floor – 34 05 02

1934 12 22

All records connected with Pye Radio dances were broken when over 600 attended the annual Christmas ball at the Dorothy. Practically everybody knew everybody else and consequently the crowd was a thoroughly cheerful and merry throng. Not one glum face was to be seen either in the ballroom or the bar. Fancy hats and novelties added greatly to the carnival gaiety and the Percy Cowell and the Pyramids bands rose to the occasion in a lively manner. 34 12 22

1935 02 22

Dance band contest – 35 02 22c

1936 01 10

New Chesterton Institute organised grand social at the Dorothy Café to celebrate their Golden Jubilee. The whole of the Dorothy had been booked for the occasion but even then the number had to be limited to 800 and several hundred were disappointed. There was dancing to Reg Cottage's band, a progressive whist drive and a concert in the Oak Room. Miss Queenie Chapman's pupils gave an excellent dancing display and Pat Peddle and Joan Metcalfe produced a version of 'Top Hat'. Suppers were served through the evening when a gramophone provided appropriate music. Many tired people were very glad of buses to various parts of the town. 36 01 10a

1936 05 09

Marjorie Moss who is well-known to local dancers as a crooner with Percy Cowell's band has won a round of a £600 light singing competition organised by the Gaumont-British Corporation & the News Chronicle at Peterborough. She will go to the final at Ipswich and if successful to London for the All-England final. Success there will mean that she will broadcast. Miss Moss, who is a member of the Enthusiasts' Concert Party, chose as her song 'Some of these days' and was accompanied by Percy Cowell himself. 36 05 09b

1937 01 09

Les Walton, the popular Rendezvous band leader, who introduced the 'Jig' which proved a success, has introduced a new dance to Cambridge for the first time. It is called the St Bernard. One of the bandmen, George Oldfield, brought it back with him after a visit to Streatham Locarno. It is undoubtedly going to make a 'hit' and was enthusiastically taken by 'Rendy' patrons. It is nice to have something fresh in the way of a dance. 37 01 09

1937 02 10

At least 400 Cambridge people took part in Shrove Tuesday dances and Rob Roy Boat Club followed tradition by indulging in pancake scrambles. There were over 100 dancers at Houghton Hall where Geoff Fearn and his orchestra provided a popular medley of new and old numbers. Gay costumes, reminiscent of the days of Uncle Tom Cobley, enlivened the scene at the Dorothy Café for the fancy dress dance held by the Association of West Country Folk while 200 were at the Rob Roy dance at the Rendezvous. 37 02 10

1937 02 23

The News made history by holding the first Cambridge and County Press Ball at the Dorothy Café where a gay crowd, some 300 strong, danced, supped and had a really good time. There were two bands – Percy Cowell's and Percy Read's - providing a continuous programme of music for valets, waltzes and the 'Paul Jones' with spot prizes given by local firms. Two tasty suppers were followed by a midnight cabaret with star turn Tommy Fields (Gracie's brother) who did a spot of female impersonation. His pleasant smile and India rubber legs will be long remembered. 37 02 23 & e – photo – 37 02 20

1937 05 07

Four members of George Challice's Band had a remarkable escape from serious injury. They were being driven back to Cambridge from a dance at the new Bottisham Village College when their car, a Riley Nine, skidded on the wet road, caught the verge and somersaulted several times. It finished up on the road with the wheels in the air. The occupants scrambled out with considerable difficulty. When an attempt was made to right the car, it fell to pieces. 37 05 07b

1938 01 01

Dick Whittington and his cat ushered in the New Year at the Dorothy Café where Percy Cowell and his band kept up a programme of old and new dances including the Palais Glide. Just before midnight all lights in the ballroom were extinguished as Dick, joined by two fairies, bombard the 650 dancers with paper hats and other carnival novelties. At the Salisbury Conservative Working Men's Club in Mill Road just over 200 danced to the rhythm of Cliff West's band while Son's Accordion Band played to a packed floor at the Beaconsfield Hall. 38 01 01a & b

1940

1940 01 10

Sir - we notice that the Rex management persists with their 'curfewed' dances, closing at 11pm. The men of the Services who now frequent the ballroom go away at about 10.30 pm so they say there is no need to carry on the late nights till midnight. Yet it was the regulars who kept the place going before the war and it will be these dancers who will be expected to do so when the war is over. - Rendy Regular 40 01 10b

1940 10 21

Rifle fired during struggle at dance at Beaconsfield Hall – 40 10 21a

1942 05 21

Country dances in Guildhall, sword dance – 42 05 21a

1943 06 22

Jitterbug contest at Rex – photo – 43 06 22

1943 11 10

Cambridge Corn Exchange venue for Barn Dance staged by American Red Cross for US forces' celebration of traditional American custom of Hallowe'en ... at one end a Guy Fawkes surrounded by straw ... dances consisted slow foxtrots and quicksteps to the famous American Flying Eagles band. Were crates of apples and pears from which the many dancers, numbering about 1,800 were at liberty to help themselves. Refreshments served free of charge by an American clubmobile – a canteen on wheelers – about 3,000 American doughnuts, 25 gallons of coffee and 30 gallons of cider, beside orange and lemonade. Pumpkins cut into faces grotesquely illuminated by candles ... 43 11 10

1946 03 15

English Folk Dance and Song Society first festival in seven years [9.3]

1947 07 01

Well known and a popular figure in Cambridge musical circles for many years, Mr Percy Cowell, Musical Director at the Dorothy Cafe, died at his home. He was 61. Born in Cambridge he was first employed in the office at Messrs Eaden Lilley's, playing the piano in his spare time. In the early twenties he took up his musical career seriously. At one time he ran a band at the Rendezvous and several years ago he had a band at the Trocadero restaurant, Piccadilly, London. When the New Dorothy Cafe was opened in 1930 his band was installed as a resident one and he was fully employed until the early months of the war, when he was joined by Mr Reg Cottage and his band

1947 08 05

A Bank Holiday gala dance attracted large numbers to the Guildhall on Monday night, when they found Billy Kaye and his Sextet much to their liking. Liela Rowland was a big hit, with her interpretation of the popular tunes of the day, and particularly pleasing was "People will say we're in love". The rhythm of the samba, the calypso, the beguine and the rumba were heard in a special Latin-American session and met with marked success 47 08 05

1947 09 03

In the words of Councillor Frank Priest "the new floor of the Cambridge Guildhall is well and truly laid". This brief ceremony was performed last night at the first Ball of the season, and what a delight it was to dance on such a new and beautifully polished floor. One couple, probably so unaccustomed to such smoothness in Cambridge, were rather too enthusiastic and found themselves, quite unintentionally, making a seat on the floor! It is thought that some of the shoes and hob-nail boots worn by dancers during the war years was the reason for the bad state of the previous floor. 47 09 03 [2.2]

1947 11 01

Managers, employees and customers all met on the same side of the counter when Lloyds Bank Ltd, Cambridge, held their first social function since the end of the war. It took place at the Dorothy Cafe and consisted of a dinner and ball which included a variety of dances, both old and new, to suit all ages. Two rooms, the lower dining room and the Oak Room were used for the dinner and the guests then returned to the ballroom where the resident band had already started on the lengthy programme of dances. These included such things as the palais glide, conga and hokey-cokey in which everyone joined.

1948 02 03

A new Cambridge ballroom known as The Embassy is to be opened at Mill Road tomorrow evening. Formerly a billiards hall, the building has been converted by Mr Harry Bradford, who claims that as a result of the labours of himself and friends the building is now "a lovely ballroom". For the opening tomorrow the new resident professional band is led by Freddie Webb, who has just left the Bag o'Nails Club, London, to take over the leadership. With him are Tony Rivers, alto saxophone, Dusty

Myatt (piano) and Freddy Webb, drummer. Guest vocalist with the band is Harry Roy, vocalist Terry da Costa 48 02 03

1948 02 06

"It could not have been better placed for now it will eliminate the necessity of people of this district having to go to the Guildhall and like places for their entertainment. The management are to be congratulated on the redecoration of the building". So said Ald A.E. Stubbs, M.P. of the new "Embassy" ballroom Mill Road, Cambridge. And if the reaction of a "capacity" crowd who flocked to this new venture are anything to go by, his words were most heartily endorsed. From the word "Go" at 7.30 the crowd set out to make the most of their new ballroom, and numbers steadily increased until the maximum of 300 dancers had been reached 48 02 06

1948 04 13

History was made at the New Theatre, Cambridge, last night when the International Ballet Company presented the most spacious classical ballet spectacle ever to be seen in Cambridge. And the result was an evening of sheet beauty. A company of over sixty presented a performance outstanding for its virility and attack, and there was a first class orchestra - their numbers made it necessary for them to "overflow" from the orchestra pit into adjoining boxes and the stalls. The work last night was the full-length version of "The Swan Lake". Leading the superb company is the prima ballerina Mona Inglesby 48 04 13

1949 02 09

To celebrate the first anniversary of the opening of the Embassy Ballroom, Mill Road, Cambridge a birthday ball was held there when the resident band, under Freddy Webb, was augmented. A very happy note was struck by the appearance of Ken Turner and his band from the Rex Ballroom, together with their wives and lady friends, on the dance floor, dancing for a change, instead of playing for others. Altogether a very happy birthday evening for the ballroom 49 02 09

1949 10 05

The reopening of the Dorothy Ballroom gave a capacity crowd of 600 a preview of a large-scale modernising scheme. A first glimpse of the ballroom's "new look" provides a startling contrast with its former style. A striking feature of the room is the domed ceiling which forms a background for a finely-traced pattern of gold-rib - one of the foremost of modern decorative trends. A central feature has been created from the orchestral stage, which accommodates a newly-formed band of ten instrumentalists, under the direction of Reg Cottage. This who took over from Percy Cowell who'd been there 16 years 49 10 05 [1.9]

1949 11 16

For the second year running, Mr Percy Warrington of Cherry Hinton, and Mrs Cynthia Pitman of Trumpington, have carried off the Bobwyn Challenge Bowl awarded each year to the winners of the Cambs Old Time Dance Championship. It was held at the Rex Ballroom which had been attractively decorated with lovely chrysanthemums and green ferns surround thin the bandstand and the balcony. Tables and chair for sitting-out were placed around the sides of the room. The ballroom was filled to capacity. 49 11 16

1949 12 30

One of England's favourite band leaders, Ted Heath, received a great welcome when he played in Cambridge for the first time last night at the Rex Ballroom. Heath fans turned up in their hundreds - the ballroom was filled to capacity - both to listen and dance to the music of this top-line combination. At times the volume of the band was rather too loud for the Rex - which was perhaps inevitable since it consists of 18 players, but, on the whole, the maestro regulated the tone extremely well. Ted Heath himself has been termed England's "King of Swing". His own band has been in existence for just over four years now. The second band for the evening was the resident one on of Roy Richards and his Mayfair Music

1950

1950 01 19

In these days, when it not always easy to let the ballroom for a dance, it is unusual to hear of the Cambridge Guildhall being booked two consecutive nights in order to accommodate all those wishing to attend a function. This happened when the Cambridge Co-operative Society held their annual staff party for 900 employees and friends. Special trains brought them from Duxford, Melbourn, Burwell, Willingham and Bishop's Stortford 50 01 19

1951 09 09

The name of Roy Fox will conjure up many nostalgic memories for the generation of dancers who had their hey-day in the years before the war. It was way back in 1930 when he first left America for England and now he has returned to give a new generation the pleasure of dancing to his distinctly individual style of playing. At the Rex ballroom, Cambridge, there was a packed house to hear the melodies of his Whispering Rhythm. Of the 13 members of the orchestra five are violinists – unusual for a popular dance outfit these days – and has a more pleasing effect on the ear than the rather 'brassy' arrangements which one normally hears with modern dance bands 51 09 09

1951 10 26 c

Last night saw the first Youth Conservative function under a post-war Conservative Government when Cambridgeshire Young Conservatives and their friends met at the Dorothy Ballroom for a long-awaited "Victory Ball". Visitors came from as far as March and Peterborough to join in the fun. Dancing was to Reg Cottage and one novelty dance was the political elimination; the first party out was Labour and the winners were "Conservative". Miss E. Plummer (Teversham) won a biscuit barrel with her lucky admission ticket. Other prizes included a basket of fruit, a tray of sweets, a basket of apples, and nylons.

1952 11 22

Mr George Hawkins has disposed of his holdings in the firm of G.P. Hawkins Ltd to the Cambridge Co-operative Society and a new company has been formed. But he has insisted that 'The Dorothy' will continue on the same lines as in the past and did not agree to the change-over until given that assurance. Running a catering establishment of this size is no easy task, made greater during the war when he was also the Regional Bread Officer for the Ministry of Food.

1953 01 01

Cambridge welcomed the New Year in the traditional style and at all the City's ballrooms and dance halls dancers spent the midnight hour in the usual noisy, happy manner. Everywhere there were capacity crowds. At the attractively decorated Guildhall 500 witnessed the arrival of 1953 at a carnival dance with music by the Astral All Stars Dance Orchestra. At the Cambridge University Assistants' Annual Dance at the Examination Hall 1,000 people danced to George Freestone and His Music while at The Dorothy the music of Red Cottage's Orchestra was relayed downstairs to the café which was used as an extension to the ballroom.

1955 06 15

May Balls are with us again. At Trinity Nat Temple and his band played for a large number of dancers, at St John's guests danced to the music of Hedley Ward and his orchestra while at Clare Tommy Kinsman provided music for everyone – one room being set aside for jiving! Downing had a marquee setting where two hundred couples danced to the music of Chappie D'Amato, who also played at Christ's. 55 06 15

1956

Guildhall bans jiving at dances - "people jiving to waltz" complaint [2.14]

Dance halls ban rock & roll sessions [2.16]

1956 10 09

Cambridge Licensing Magistrates have asked Associated British Cinemas not to show the controversial American musical film 'Rock Around the Clock'. The film features a new style of dancing known as "Rock'n'Roll". It is a rhythm similar to some of the African native 'beats' and is alleged to have a startling effect on young people who like 'hot music'. In London dancing youngsters have caused trouble in the streets and assaults have been made on the police. 56 10 09 [2.15]

1957 02 16

Rock'n'Roll session Rex Ballroom – Mick Mulligan 57 02 16

1957 10 12

Cambridge dancers will learn with pleasure that the Ken Stevens Orchestra have been engaged as the new resident band at the Rex Ballroom. It features singing star Jimmy Cross, sax players Don Jenkins, Mike Waller, Bert Smith and Denis Range with Barry Mason (trumpet), Ken Southee (bass), Bernie Stubbings (drums) and Ken Stevens (piano). 57 10 12

1960s The Cambridgeshire Collection has detailed newspaper cuttings files from this date

1960 03 05

Corpus Christi student attempts world record for non-stop jiving [12.3]

1960 03 07

A 25-hour non-stop jive session at The Dorothy ballroom was won by The Rebels, a team of jivers from the Corner House Café in King Street. The American team from Alconbury were the first to crack, followed by the Corpus Christi team and Daddy's Nite Club. At the end of the session only three members of these teams were on their feet. Back at the Corner House Café the Rebels' supporters took the news of their triumph quietly. In their leather jacket and jeans they talked over cups of coffee. But the juke box was silent by order of Magistrates. Two of the Rebels, Colin Knight and Graham Jones used the session as a practice for a 25-mile cycle sprint race. 60 03 07 [3.8]

1960 03 25

The floor shuddered under 200 pairs of dancing feet. The combined sounds of the trumpets, trombone and clarinet bounced from ceiling to wall to hit the ears with a pleasant sweetness. The Riverside Jazz Club was in full swing. Every week 200 teenagers get together in an upstairs room of the Y.M.C.A. and jive. Baggy sweaters, tight-fitting trews or flared skirts for the girls are the order of the day with jeans and sweaters for the boys. The band line-up includes Ted Vousden on banjo, Tony Thurlbourn on trumpet, Andy Cooper (clarinet), Tony Scott on drums and Sid Barrett on bass. Rodney Dale features as pianist for specialist numbers. 60 03 25

1961 05 31

When elderly dons sported kid gloves at Guildhall dances – feature – 61 05 31a & b

1961 06 14

Nearly 400 people in the south of Cambridge have protested about a proposal to build 'the greatest and best dance hall in Great Britain' in the middle of the Queen Edith's Way housing estate. The hall, which would be used for wrestling bouts, boxing matches and rock and roll sessions, will be 'completely out of keeping with the nature of the district', they claim. The proposer said the area was currently scheduled for quarrying purposes and a hall would increase the amenities. "We could either mine chalk or build a really beautiful place", he said. 61 06 14

1961 10 28

Two Cambridge couples are attempting to beat the Cambridge 25 hours non-stop jiving record at the Freebooters Club in Wellington Street. The dancing started last night at 9 o'clock with eight couples competing but six of these became exhausted and had to give up in the early hours. However Adrian Mead and his partner Linda Worboys and Fred Ellis with Bridget Holmes are continuing. The boys are not allowed to stop, but their partners can have a standby 61 10 28

1961 11 16

Several hundred people packed the Dorothy to watch UK 1962 ballroom dancing champions Bob Burgess and Doreen Freeman give an exhibition of dances including the waltz, quickstep, cha-cha, twist and Madison. After demonstrating the basic steps and variations of the Madison Bob & Doreen called for other couples to join in and soon the floor was crowded with keen enthusiasts 61 11 16a

1961 12

Ted Heath at Dorothy, Dec [8.5]

1962 04 05

The new Victoria Ballroom was opened by Ronald Fraser, the film and television star, who had previously appeared at the Regal Cinema as part of its 25th anniversary celebrations. Converted from a café above the Victoria Cinema, it will reduce the number of 'wallflowers' on Saturday nights when special buffet dinner dances are being run at a cost of a guinea for a double ticket. When not in use for dancing it will still be put into service as a café 62 04 05 [3.12,8.9]

1963 02 11

The Dorothy Café is undergoing extensive alterations to make it one of the foremost in East Anglia. The high Venetian Room – the one adjoining the main ballroom – is being split into two levels to cater for banqueting and other functions with improved toilets, creating a much better atmosphere. Already it has been completely stripped and preparations for the installation of the steel girders are well under way. This does not affect the running of the ballroom and the café downstairs 63 02 11

1963 04

Dorothy new ballroom opened, Apr

1964 06 06

The Victoria Ballroom in Market Square is the principal rendezvous for groups such as The Undertakers, The Moving Coils, Black Diamonds and Dawnbreakers. Most nights it provides a musical attraction: jazz sessions on Tuesday with top flight bands such as Kenny Ball and Chris Barber. But just around the corner the Dorothy Restaurant has featured Kathy Kirby, the Merseybeats and Manfred Mann. Helping to bury the old cry that Cambridge is 'dead' after dark are the cellar-bar 'shuffles' where regulation dress is jeans or slacks, sloppy sweaters and dark glasses. When not twisting or shaking the current rage for both sexes is to smoke miniature cigars and drink 'James Bonds' 64 06 06b

1967 09 29

Ken Stevens' music shop moves from Petty Cury to Guildhall Street; had his own band in 1950s, won music Maker Musician of the Year Award 12 years ago. Orchestra started as resident band Rex, now full-time professional playing Norwich. 67 09 29

1970

1972 04 20

The Dorothy in Cambridge has been sold. A new role for the city's best-known catering and dancing centre has not been decided by the new owners, but may include a "quality" department store. The Dorothy's present owners, G.P. Hawkins Ltd said that parking restrictions have hit the firm's business. The Dorothy contains a supermarket, restaurant, large ballroom and other rooms used by many organisations for official functions, p10

1972 09 28

A collection of Cambridge nostalgia went under the hammer as the fixtures and fittings of the Old Dorothy restaurant and ballroom were auctioned. "The Dot" as it was affectionately known to Saturday night dancers down the years was a mecca of weddings, parties, dinners and thousands of

personal memories. It was a child of the tea dance and potted palms of the 1920s and survived the Second World War to outlive nearly all its contemporaries. It closed its doors to the public in August and now its future is uncertain. Today it looked drab and tattered with mirrors, lights and other fittings ripped from the walls. About 150 attended the auction but many were only there to pay their last respects. 72 09 28

1972 11 15

Young people in Cambridge have lost their Saturday night dances - the high spot of their week - and this has meant more violence in the city, Steve, an apprentice chef at Christ's college claims. The Dorothy - the city's best known catering and dancing centre - closed in August. Teenagers have looked for other dances, but tend to spend more time wandering around looking for somewhere to go that staying in any place. Saturday night dances at the Corn Exchange suit another type of person, said Steve. They prefer a different sort of music, which he describes as "heavy". He and other young people who frequented the Dorothy preferred Tamla Mowtown music. There are more than 80 people who used to go to the Dorothy. Many of these now wander the streets of Cambridge, travelling from one pub to another looking for something to do 72 11 15

1977 08 03

Royal Ballet in Big Top (previous visit 1967) [9.5]

1977 09 03

Sitting in the enormous blue tent on Jesus Green and watching the incomparable Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet I felt that this is what a fully international university city should be all about. The huge tent provides a sufficiently large stage and seats to stage large performances and make them pay.

Cambridge should consider investing in something of this sort. It took a lot of courage, hard work and imagination to bring Sadler's Wells to Cambridge and they have brought Cambridge to the crossroads. Either it goes forward from here or it retreats. 77 09 03

1979 05 22

Hundreds of disappointed ballet enthusiasts had to be turned away from the Big Top on Jesus Green when the opening performance of the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet was cancelled. City council entertainment staff headed by Mr John Wilkinson were standing by as ballet-goers trudged through the squelching grass only to be told the bad news. Most people took it in good part, though there were complaints from those who had driven from as far as Bishop's Stortford and Hatfield. They were not interested in refunds, they wanted another chance to see the ballet. But most of the 1,200 tickets have been sold and the company's schedule means that no replacement performance can be held. 79 05 22

1980

1983 11 22

There just aren't enough ballroom dances to meet all the demand in Cambridgeshire. Already a resurgence in the dancing of 30 years ago is causing overflows and tea dances are catching on. A dance at the Long Road Sixth Form College attracted 230, too many for dancing, so numbers are now restricted. The local big band, SoundIdea, under Bob Kidman, averages three bookings a fortnight. Now a new one has made its debut: the Umbrella Big Band, a few survivors from the defunct Impington Dance Orchestra. 83 11 22 p13

1984 11 09

Cambridge discos are awful: Ronelles is all right for up to 18s but you feel out of it when you're in your 20's. And it's not just the youngsters who are complaining: their mums and grannies have their own gripes. They miss the dance halls from the Rex and Embassy, which enjoyed their heyday during the Rock and Roll boom to, the more sedate Dorothy. The Corn Exchange, formerly home of all kinds of entertainment, closed two years ago and the Kelsey Kerridge Sports hall is not ideal for stage events. So people turn to the nightclubs at Peterborough 84 11 09 p27

1990

1990 09 15

Nina Hubbard, who ran ballet school in Cambridge dies – 90 09 15a

1990 11 30

Sid Barret, musician, played in 1930s with Percy Cowell and Reg Cottage orchestras; founder member of Riverside Jazz Band; dies – 90 11 30b